



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 2025

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Book online at <https://www.rahs.org.au/rahs-events/> or call us on (02) 9247 8001

Date	Time	Event	Presenter	Member	Friend
AUGUST					
Wed 27	11am – 1pm	RAHS/WEA Workshop – <i>The Historical Land Records Viewer: Searching for Individuals</i>	Christine Yeats	\$35	\$39
SEPTEMBER					
Wed 3	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Finding the Outrageous Fortunes: Detecting the adventures of crime writer, Mary Fortune, and her criminal son</i>	Megan Brown	Free	Free
6 – 14 September		NSW History Week – <i>Water Stories #HistoryWeek2025</i>			
Wed 10	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Dangerous Passage: A Maritime History of the Torres Strait</i>	Ian Burnet	Free	Free
Fri 12	10.30am – 12.00pm	RAHS Walking Tour – <i>Water, Water, Everywhere!</i>	Judith Dunn	\$20	\$25
OCTOBER					
Wed 1	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>A (Virtual) Walk Around Sydney in June 1790</i>	Gary L. Sturgess	Free	Free
Wed 15	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Inconvenient Women: Australian Radical Writers 1900–1970</i>	Jacqueline Kent	Free	Free
NOVEMBER					
Wed 5	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Records and reveries: Alice Haigh's photographs of Sydney in the 1920s</i>	Catherine De Lorenzo	Free	Free
Tues 11	10.30am – 3.30pm	RAHS Seminar – <i>Collections and Community: Trove and NSW Historical Societies</i>	Various	Both Sessions: \$40 / \$20*	
Wed 19	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Special Lecture – <i>Horizontal noticeboards: Chalk writing during the Great Depression</i>	Megan Hicks	Free	Free
DECEMBER					
Wed 3	1pm – 2pm	RAHS Day Lecture – <i>Celebrating Joan Kerr's Legacy</i>	Susan Steggall	Free	Free
TBC	TBC	RAHS Christmas Party		Free	Free



Please check the venue details as some events are online and some are at History House, 133 Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000.
Events marked with an asterisk (*) are streamed online.

Joint RAHS/WEA events must be booked through WEA (02) 9264 2781 or <https://www.weasydney.com.au>



RAHS/WEA Workshop – *The Historical Land Records Viewer: Searching for Individuals*

Wednesday, 27 August 2025, 11am – 1pm at History House

Cost: RAHS Members \$35 | Non-Members \$39

Bookings through WEA (02) 9264 2781 or online at <https://www.weasydney.com.au/course/RAHS25.03>

Join us for a course on using the Historical Land Records Viewer (HLRV) to research individuals and properties. This course will guide participants through the process of accessing and interpreting historical land records, parish maps, and other key documents. Ideal for family historians, local researchers, and anyone interested in land ownership and settlement patterns, the course offers step-by-step instruction, research tips, and real-life examples. No prior experience is necessary. By the end of the course, participants will be equipped with the skills to explore land history and uncover valuable insights into the lives of past individuals and families.

About the speaker: Christine Yeats (FRAHS, BA, Dip Lib, Dip Arch Admin) is an archivist and historical researcher, with particular interest in women's history. Her research interests include attempts to introduce a silk industry into the Australian colonies and the history of the Romani (Gypsies) in nineteenth-century Australia. She is the Immediate Past President of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies; RAHS Councillor 2012–25 (Senior Vice President 2012–18, 2022–, President 2018–21; Convenor Events Committee 2012–); President Randwick & District Historical Society; Convenor, Assessment Sub-Committee UNESCO AMOW Committee and Chair of the Jessie Street National Women's Library.

RAHS Day Lecture – *Finding the Outrageous Fortunes: Detecting the adventures of crime writer, Mary Fortune, and her criminal son, George*

Wednesday, 3 September 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free

The saga of journalist and crime writer Mary Fortune and her criminal son, George, forms a most unusual chapter in Australian history. Mary was a woman of mystery, her life adventurous, to say the least. It spanned several continents and included long stints on the Victorian goldfields and 'Marvellous Melbourne' from 1853 to 1911. It included a bigamous marriage to a police trooper. She was gaoled for drunkenness. She had a long, prolific career writing crime fiction (in addition to various genres of journalism). Her illegitimate son, George, became a career criminal – meaning that while Mary was writing about crime, George was committing it. Uncovering the mysteries of Mary and George has been a lengthy adventure in literary detection for co-authors Lucy Sussex and Megan Brown, with the 2025 publication of *Outrageous Fortunes* being the culmination of the last ten years of their quest. This lecture will offer a glimpse of their discoveries about Mary and George and highlight the literary and historical significance of their respective stories.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Dangerous Passage: A Maritime History of the Torres Strait*

Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free

The reef-strewn passage between the Australian mainland and Papua New Guinea remains the most hazardous of all the major Straits in the world. It is 270 kilometres long and only 150 kilometres wide, but it contains over 274 islands, islets, coral reefs, and coral cays. Its waters are full of potential hazards separated by narrow and often dangerous channels. The Torres Strait Islanders knew these waters well because voyaging and trade were part of their lives and livelihoods, but early European explorers like Luis Vas de Torres and James Cook were forced to find their route through the Strait without any previous maps. Early navigators such as Torres, Cook, Bligh, and Flinders contributed to the charting of this dangerous passage. However, it was not until the completion of detailed hydrographic surveys by the British Admiralty in the 1840s, the advent of steamships, and the introduction of Torres Strait Pilots that it could ultimately be used as a major shipping route. Readers should be advised that this history will include stories of murder, mayhem, mutiny, disastrous shipwrecks, desperate voyages of survival in open boats, headhunting and hurricanes.

About the speaker: Ian Burnet is the author of seven books on maritime history, the spice trade and the vast archipelago to the north of Australia. These include *The Tasman Map*, *Joseph Conrad's Eastern Voyages* and *Dangerous Passage*. Details can be found on his website, www.ianburnetbooks.com.

RAHS Walking Tour – *Water, Water, Everywhere!***Friday, 12 September 2025, 10.30am – 12.00pm****Meet at the junction of Martin Place and Macquarie Street, Sydney****Cost: RAHS Members \$20 | Non-Members \$25**

Join this 1.5-hour stroll around Hyde Park and its environs to discover water features that go unnoticed as we hurry about our city business. Major water sculptures are immediately obvious, but we will also discover, among others, a copy of a sculpture in the heart of Florence, a reference to the town's water supply, drinking fountains for the thirsty, a scent bottle and a memorial to a popular Sydney actor.

About the speaker: Judith Dunn OAM, FPDHS is a tour guide and sought-after public speaker, who received an Order of Australia for services to history and heritage, and holds a Parramatta and District Historical Society Fellowship for researching and recording Parramatta history. Over decades, Judith has accumulated expert, specialist knowledge in heritage conservation and archaeological matters relating to local heritage sites and historic cemeteries, and regularly monitors site changes and informs site owners on a voluntary basis.

RAHS Day Lecture – *A (Virtual) Walk Around Sydney in June 1790***Wednesday, 1 October 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free**

Gary Sturgess takes us on a virtual walk around the settlement in Sydney Cove at the end of the First Fleet period, just before the Second Fleet arrived. Using contemporary paintings, charts and documentary sources, he recreates the physical environment of 'the camp', enabling us to better understand key events in the early settlement, and the shape of Georgian Sydney today.

About the speaker: Gary L. Sturgess is an academic and former public servant who has closely studied the legal, financial and managerial foundations of the transportation system. In preparing to write a social history of the First Fleet period, he has explored the physical layout of the early settlement. Sturgess is the author of numerous articles on the convict system in peer-reviewed journals, and much of his work is published on his website, BotanyBaymen.com.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Inconvenient Women: Australian radical writers 1900–1970***Wednesday, 15 October 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free**

While Australia's crusaders for women's voting rights and the radical feminists of the 1970s are well known, less attention has been given to the generation between: the trailblazing women writers who challenged the nation's status quo throughout the twentieth century. Jacqueline Kent traces the influence of women whose lives and work were shaped by the seismic events of the twentieth century, illuminating their immense courage and principled determination to change the world.

About the speaker: Jacqueline Kent is a National Biography Award-winning writer principally of biographies, especially those of women. She has written the life stories of editor Beatrice Davis, pianist and social activist Hephzibah Menuhin, trans pioneer April Ashley, and the only full biography of Australia's first woman prime minister Julia Gillard. She holds a Doctorate of Creative Arts from the University of Technology, Sydney.

RAHS Day Lecture – *Records and reveries: Alice Haigh's photographs of Sydney in the 1920s***Wednesday, 5 November 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free**

The beautifully-crafted photo albums created in the 1920s by RAHS member Alice Maud Haigh (1878–1934) deserve recognition both for what they tell us about the rapidly-changing urban and architectural environment in Sydney, and for their implicit invitation to see more of our urban setting by walking the streets and understanding the context. This talk introduces the photographer and her work.

About the speaker: Dr Catherine De Lorenzo brings cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspectives to her research on Australian art, photography, exhibitions, and public art. Having co-authored *Australian Art Exhibitions: Opening Our Eyes* (2018), her current project, with Bandgalung curator/writer Djon Mundine, examines selected Australian art exhibitions in Europe since 1937. She has served as an associate editor on several international journals, and is an Adjunct A/Professor at Monash University.

RAHS Seminar – *Collections and Community: Trove and NSW Historical Societies*

Tuesday, 11 November 2025, 10.30am – 3.30pm at History House and Online

Cost (in-person): Both Sessions \$40 | Session A \$35 | Session B \$15

Cost (online): Both Sessions \$20 | Session A \$15 | Session B \$10

Connecting Collections: Using Trove to Promote Local and Community History

Presenters from the National Library of Australia will share the latest information on using Trove and explain how historical societies can also become an active contributor. Elizabeth Mackenzie will share updated resources, search tips and tools that support researchers to efficiently navigate the vast and ever-growing Trove collections. Fiona Clarke will explain how historical societies and community groups can become Content Contributor partners and share their own collection records with Trove's user community. She will also present on Community Heritage Grants, a long-standing Australian Government grants program that supports community groups care for their nationally significant collections.

Connecting Community: Supporting and Sustaining Local Historical Societies

We will celebrate the 2025 Certificates of Achievement, recognising the contributions of volunteers from affiliated societies, and provide a practical forum for discussing how historical societies can collaborate, adopt new tools, and sustain their work for future generations. Together, we'll share knowledge, recognise contributions, and look at ways to keep NSW community history strong and connected.

RAHS Special Lecture – *Horizontal noticeboards: Chalk writing on pavements during the Great Depression*

Wednesday, 19 November 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free

Mr Eternity was not the only person chalking on footpaths in the 1930s. Writing on pavements is a form of graffiti that is seldom discussed but, despite its ephemerality, there is ample evidence for its existence during the last century or more. I investigated one short era, the tumultuous Great Depression years of the early 1930s, and found many examples of chalk and whitewash pavement writing. It was prolific, conspicuous, newsworthy and integral to the story of public life and politics in Australia during those turbulent times.

About the speaker: Megan Hicks was a curator at the Powerhouse Museum for many years before turning to freelance work as a museum and heritage advisor, particularly for organisations with health and medicine collections. Megan completed a PhD on 'Pavement graffiti' at Macquarie University and went on to become an Adjunct Researcher in urban studies with Western Sydney University. Currently, as an independent researcher, Megan's particular interest is informal writing in public spaces, including graffiti and flyposters.

RAHS Day Lecture – *Celebrating Joan Kerr's Legacy*

Wednesday, 3 December 2025, 1pm – 2pm at History House. Cost: Free

Joan Kerr AM FAHA (1938–2004) was an Australian academic and cultural preservationist whose passion for safeguarding architectural heritage expanded to encompass art history and culture. Joan was a powerful force in the world of art history for several decades, encouraging many younger women historians to make their marks in the public arena. Joan taught nationwide, contributed to preservation societies, and authored significant works, including *Heritage: The national women's art book, 500 works by 500 Australian women artists from colonial times to 1955*, which was launched 30 years ago.

About the speaker: Dr Susan Steggall has written a memoir: *Alpine Beach: A Family Adventure* (1999); a biography: *A Most Generous Scholar: Joan Kerr, Art and Architectural Historian* (a successful PhD thesis and winner in the 2013 Society of Women Writers NSW Book Awards); plus novels: *Forget Me Not* (2006), *It Happened Tomorrow* (2013), *'Tis the Doing Not the Deed* (2019), *The Heritage You Leave Behind* (2021) and *To Carve Identity* (2024). Susan also writes art-related articles, exhibition and book reviews, chapters and essays.

Updated 7 November 2025